

July 7, 2003

We Need You to Bring the Truth Home to Seniors . . .

*Democratic Leaders Urge Colleagues to Hold
National Day of Prescription Drug Town Hall Meetings
On Saturday, July 19th*

Dear Democratic Colleague:

We need you to bring the truth home to America's seniors: The legislation passed by Congressional Republicans on prescription drugs is a wolf in sheep's clothing. It could destroy the Medicare program that seniors have counted on since President Johnson signed it into law in 1965.

Thus, we urge you to hold a "Prescription Drug Town Hall Meeting" in your Congressional District on Saturday, July 19, as part of House Democrats' National Day of Prescription Drug Town Hall Meetings.

We ask that you meet with your constituents on this day to educate them about the Republicans' dangerous plan, as well as to tell them that House Democrats are continuing to fight to add a prescription drug benefit to Medicare that is guaranteed, affordable, and available to all seniors and disabled Americans.

While we lost a vote on June 27, the fight continues. And it's our strong belief that Democrats must take this debate directly to our seniors – perhaps the most politically astute group in America. The best way to do that is through the give-and-take of town hall meetings that individually generate favorable media coverage in your District and collectively generate a pro-active, positive message about House Democrats in the national media.

We are working with the Alliance for Retired Americans and other groups to help every Member hold a productive and well-attended meeting. We will be sending out a "How To" packet later this week with sample press releases, advisories, talking points and other helpful materials to help you plan your town hall meeting.

At this time, please reserve a place in your schedule to hold at least one "Prescription Drug Town Hall Meeting" on Saturday, July 19. If you have any questions, please contact Stacey Farnen in the Democratic Whip's Office at 5-3130 or Jennifer Crider in the Democratic Leader's Office at 5-0100.

Sincerely,

Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader

Steny H. Hoyer
Democratic Whip

Robert Menendez
Democratic Caucus Chair

Summary of Republican HEA Title II Bill – H.R. 2211 (as reported by Committee)
Introduced, May 22, 2003 (Gingrey)

H.R. 2211, the Ready to Teach Act of 2003 would reauthorize Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) with little if any structural changes. The bill would authorize Title II programs at such sums through FY 2008. The bill was reported by voice vote.

Current law

Title II, Part A of the HEA authorizes grant programs designed to improve the quality of teaching and a reporting and accountability system on the quality of teacher preparation, including the pass rates of graduates of schools of education on certification assessments. This structure was first created during the last reauthorization of the HEA in 1998.

Grant programs

Title II, Part A of the HEA authorizes three types of competitively awarded grants:

- **State grants** are used to increase accountability of teacher preparation programs or reform teacher certification requirements. States are required to match 50 percent of any grant amount they receive. Failing to demonstrate progress toward specific objectives after 2 years can result in grant termination. State grants are awarded for a 3-year period.
- **Partnership grants** fund teacher quality activities conducted by partnerships of: teacher preparation programs, school of arts and sciences, and high need local educational agencies. Recipients of partnership grants must match 25 percent of the grant amount in the 1st year, 35 percent in the second year, and 50 percent each succeeding year. Partnership grants are awarded for a 5-year period.
- **Recruitment grants** support scholarships with a teaching service requirement to recruit highly qualified teachers. Funding is provided to States or partnerships (as described above). Recruitment grants are awarded for a 3-year period.

Title II contains one authorization of appropriations and designates 45, 45, and 10 percent respectively for each of these programs. These programs were funded at \$89.4 million in FY 2003. President Bush requested \$90 million for these programs in FY 2004.

Accountability Provisions

Title II's accountability provisions require States receiving HEA funds to report annually on the quality of teacher preparation, including information on the pass rates of their graduates on initial certification assessments. Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) with students in their teacher preparation programs that utilize Title IV aid must report annually on the pass rates of their graduates on teacher certification exams. The Secretary of Education is also required to report information contained in State reports annually.

States must establish procedures for identifying low-performing teacher preparation programs. If states withdraw approval or funding due to this designation, the affected programs cannot enroll students receiving HEA Title IV federal student aid. Very few institutions have been designated low performing.

Preparing Tomorrow's Teachers to Use Technology (PT3)

PT3 was authorized as Title II, Part B of ESEA as part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The program provides competitive grants to consortiums of Institutions of Higher Education, State Educational Agencies, local educational agencies, and other entities to redesign teacher preparation programs to ensure prospective teachers can use technology as part of their instructional techniques in the classroom. President Bush's FY 2004 budget proposed to eliminate this program.

H.R. 2211

The bill largely keeps the structure in current law, including the 3 grant programs under Title II, Part A and makes changes to the accountability provisions under the same Part. In addition, the bill reauthorizes the PT3 program at such sums through FY 2008.

Significant changes made to current law by the bill include:

Minority Centers of Excellence – The bill establishes a new Centers of Excellence program, which provides grants to Minority Serving Institutions to improve teacher quality and preparation. H.R. 2211 authorizes \$10 million for the centers.

Makes Title II consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – The bill adds several definitions and references from NCLB, and applies these definitions to Title II, Part A programs, including NCLB definitions such as highly qualified, scientifically-based research and professional development.

High Need LEA – As described above, a “high need local educational agency” must be part of a partnership under the partnership grants program. The bill changes the definition of high need LEA. Under the bill, a high need LEA is defined as an LEA meeting one of 3 characteristics: (1) at least 10,000 children from families with incomes below the poverty line, or 20 percent of such children making up the child-age population of the LEA; (2) in States which have no school districts which meet the criteria under (1), the school districts with the highest number and percentage of children in poverty; and (3) rural school districts with less than 600 students. All high need local educational agencies must also have a high percentage of teachers teaching out of field or on emergency certification. It also adds language that requires that at least 50 percent of partnership funds be used to directly benefit partner local educational agencies.

Expands definition of Partnership. The bill would expand which entities make up a partnership for the partnership grant program to include a public or private educational organization.

States can receive multiple grants under State grant program. Under current law, States are only permitted to receive a State grant once. Significantly more than half of all States have been awarded Title II State grants. The bill eliminates this provision.

Adds a definition of “teaching skills” to the Act that is based on scientifically based research.

Requires evaluation of State grant activities that are based on teacher effectiveness (as measured by increased student academic achievement) and teacher mastery of academic subjects they teach.

Requires the Governor of a State to attest to the reliability of State data reported to the Secretary of Education.

Expands uses of funds - Adds retention of high quality teachers as a use of funds under the State and partnership programs. Adds a use of funds to develop strategies to improve the qualifications of prekindergarten teachers to the State grant program. Adds recruitment of individuals from high demand industries, such as technology industries to become teachers to the recruitment program.

Updated Accountability. The bill modifies the reporting requirements of States and IHEs to require reporting on the pass rates of prospective teachers on certification exams who have completed at least 50% of the coursework of the teacher preparation program. In addition, the bill requires that IHEs report their average pass rate for students who have completed at least 50 percent of the coursework of the teacher preparation program compared to other IHEs in the State. Under current law, States were permitted to report the pass rates of graduates of teacher preparation programs. This led several States and IHEs to report that 100 percent of their graduates had passed their certification assessments. Among other reasons, these States were commonly able to report in this manner due to their requirement that a prospective teacher must pass the applicable certification assessments prior to graduation.

Authorizes programs at the original authorization level of \$300 million for Part A activities.

Summary of H.R. 438 – The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act of 2003
(as reported by Committee)
Introduced March 3, 2003 (Wilson - R-SC)

H.R. 438, as introduced, would expand the loan forgiveness provisions in Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) to \$17,500 for math science and special education teachers teaching in Title I schools with at least 30 percent poverty. The bill provides for the loan forgiveness to be dispersed incrementally over the 5 years of service as a teacher, rather than at the end of 5 years.

Current Law

The 1998 reauthorization of the HEA established a loan forgiveness program for teachers teaching in Title I schools. Borrowers with no outstanding loan balance as of 1998 could receive up to \$5,000 in loan forgiveness after teaching for 5 years in a Title I school with at least 30 percent poverty, if they were teaching a subject which is related to their academic major.

H.R. 438

This legislation would increase the amount of forgiveness to \$17,500 for only math, science and special education teachers. It does not cover all teachers teaching in Title I schools as under current law. To be eligible for loan forgiveness, these teachers would still be required to meet the requirements in existing law (teach in a Title I school with at least 30 percent poverty). In addition, the subcommittee reported version would require teachers who receive loan forgiveness to be highly qualified (as defined under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act). This bill encompasses the proposal put forward by President Bush, as part of his FY 03 and 04 budget requests. Congressional Budget Office (CBO) scored the Subcommittee approved version of this legislation and it would cost \$350 million in Budget Authority over 11 years.

FY 2004 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill

House Republicans have indicated they will bring the FY 04 Labor HHS Education bill to the floor on Thursday, July 10th. This inadequate funding bill was opposed by all Democrats on the Appropriations Committee on June 25th and by all Democrats on the Labor-HHS-Education Subcommittee on June 19th. During the full committee markup, Republicans rejected a comprehensive Democratic substitute that would have restored funding to key programs.

Of particular note, this bill fails to meet specific promises made by Republicans to increase funding for education programs. Also, during this time of record unemployment, rising numbers of Americans without health insurance, and state budget cutbacks, this bill shortchanges critically needed programs.

The bill breaks Republican promises in education funding:

Breaks Republican Promises to Increase Overall Education Funding:

Just over two months ago, the Majority passed a conference report for the FY 04 Budget Resolution that promised to provide a \$3 billion increase from the previous year for the Department of Education. This appropriations bill falls far short of that commitment, and provides only a \$2.3 billion (or 4.3%) increase -- the smallest dollar increase for education in four years and the smallest percentage increase in eight years.

Fails To Meet Commitment To Leave No Child Left Behind: When the No Child Left Behind Act was signed into law, President Bush and Congress promised to provide greater resources in exchange for reforms. Although states are working towards the new accountability goals, this appropriations bill provides only a \$382 million (or 1.6%) increase over current funding for the No Child Left Behind Act – which is a freeze in real terms and \$8 billion short of full funding.

Breaks Repeated Promises To Increase Special Education Funding:

The FY 04 Budget Resolution conference report also promised to increase IDEA funding by \$2.2 billion over the current level to help school districts

meet the cost of special education. During the recent IDEA reauthorization debate, Republicans again promised this increase. This bill provides less than half of the increase promised -- a \$1.2 billion shortfall.

Breaks Promises to Increase Title I Funding: The FY 04 Budget Resolution conference report also included a \$1 billion (or 8.6%) increase over the current level for Title I grants to school districts. Yet, the \$12.35 billion provided in this bill is \$334 million short of the amount promised in the budget for the 9 million low-income children that qualify for Title I assistance. This amount is more than \$ 6 billion below the amount authorized in the No Child Left Behind Act.

Reduces Commitments to Support College Education: During this time of state cutbacks leading to skyrocketing tuition increases at public universities, this bill freezes the maximum Pell grant at \$4,050. This amount only meets approximately 38% of college costs – compared to 84% when Pell Grants were first established. Nearly 5 million students depend on Pell Grants, the majority of have incomes of \$30,000 or less. This bill also freezes all other forms of student financial assistance at the same time.

The bill shortchanges other key priorities:

Cuts Low-Income Heating Assistance (LIHEAP): This bill cuts LIHEAP funding to \$1.8 billion, which is less than last year, and \$200 million less than even the President's \$2 billion request. This important program helps our most vulnerable citizens with their home energy needs.

Unravels Progress in Scientific and Medical Research at the National Institutes of Health (NIH): Over the past five year Congress has worked on a bipartisan basis to double the NIH budget and improve science and medical research. This appropriations bill brings that progress to a screeching halt by including only a 2.5% increase -- which is not only a sharp deceleration from the 15% annual increases of the past five year, but also the smallest percentage increase in more than 15 years. This amount is not even enough to keep up with inflation in research costs (which NIH estimates at 3.3%) and will only permit an increase of just two-tenths of one percent in the number of new and competing research grants (outside of the bio-defense area) – just 21 new grants for all of NIH.

Inadequately Funds Health Care Safety Net Programs: This bill provides the smallest percentage increase since 1998 for Community Health Centers, which serve 13 million people who lack access to health services in rural and urban areas. The bill provides no increase at all for the Maternal and Child Health Block Grant, or the National Health Service Corps. It also provides no increase for the childhood immunization program, which has already been having trouble keeping up with the rising cost of vaccinating children.

Slashes Unemployment Programs: This bill cuts the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) by \$150.8 million. This cut will reduce services for the growing numbers of low-income, working poor and the long-term unemployed. In many areas, this cut will shut down programs which upgrade the skills and marketability of TANF recipients and other low-wage workers. And it will shut down desperately needed emergency food distribution efforts for homeless and other low-income families.

Underfunds Bioterrorism Preparedness: This bill provides state and local health departments with \$94 million less in bioterrorism preparedness grants than they received this year. The bill also provides less than half the amount needed to help the Department of HHS prepare to deal with an influenza pandemic.

Fails To Meet Commitment To Address Nursing Shortage: After passing the Nurse Reinvestment Act just last year to deal with the critical shortage of nurses, this bill provides no increase at all in funding for those programs. The bill actually contains \$7 million less than the President's request for the nurse scholarship and student loan repayment program.